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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1406
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4332
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0349
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4588
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0316
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9692
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2575
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3984
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9710
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0232
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0179
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0291
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0861
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1120
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001199

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS, PRM

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: NEW FOREIGN MINISTER: NO IMMEDIATE PROGRESS LIKELY
ON REFUGEE ISSUES

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

All Bhutanese in Camps Should Be Repatriated...

11. (C) In a May 10 meeting with K.P. Oli, new Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, the Ambassador highlighted recent USG efforts to find a permanent solution for the Bhutanese refugees. The Ambassador urged the government to allow UNHCR to register and verify people in the camps, and asked the government to issue travel documents to certain urgent vulnerable cases, including three minor girls whom the U.S. was willing to accept for resettlement. Oli stressed that he very much wanted to resolve the Bhutanese refugee issue and asserted that Nepal gained nothing from keeping people in the camps. The Foreign Minister expressed concern for the many ethnic Nepalis who remained in Bhutan. Oli explained that as a result of the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816, many Nepali speaking people ended up residing in India and Bhutan. Although these people still spoke Nepali, that did not make them Nepali citizens. He firmly believed that the people in the camps were Bhutanese, and that Bhutan should recognize this fact and accept all refugees back as full citizens of Bhutan.

...However, Other Options Possible

12. (C) When the Ambassador suggested third country resettlement, Oli indicated that he wanted to focus on repatriation to Bhutan. Oli acknowledged, however, that there might be options other than repatriation, saying he did not want to "negate other possibilities." He added that he hoped to continue dialogue so as to find a way forward on this issue. Oli explained that Bhutan needed to guarantee the refugees could live with respect and without fear of future ethnic cleansing upon their return to Bhutan.

Human Rights and Democracy at Heart of Issue

¶3. (C) Oli explained that the root cause of the "ethnic cleansing" was the lack of human rights and democracy in Bhutan. He viewed the issue not as one between Nepal and Bhutan, but between the people of Bhutan and their government. He noted that the Bhutanese refugees had been expelled for calling for democracy and respect for human rights. However, Oli stated that these were "fundamental" issues that were not an internal issue for any government as there were international standards that needed to be upheld. "We cannot close our eyes. We must speak out," Oli explained.

Tibetans: Not Easy

¶4. (C) The Ambassador urged the government to issue exit permits to transiting Tibetans and travel documents to Tibetan refugees resident in Nepal, highlighting our backlog of follow-to join cases. Oli noted that Nepal was "not in that easy a position." He pointed out Nepal's long history of protecting Tibetan refugees, but stressed that Nepal did "not want to hurt our neighbors to the north or south." "This is our reality," Oli explained. However, Oli stressed that Nepal was "committed" to protecting and promoting human rights. Oli commented that the Nepali government hoped to "establish a a very favorable situation of human rights in Nepal" and would work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the international community to do so.

Comment

¶5. (C) K.P. Oli, although new at his job of Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, displayed a strong background knowledge of Bhutanese refugee issues. He dealt with refugee issues as Home Minister in 1994 and 1995, when he twice led bilateral talks on the Bhutanese refugee issue, once in Thimpu and once in Kathmandu. He also comes from eastern Jhapa District, location of six of the seven Bhutanese refugee camps. Post will continue to urge the government to move forward on refugee issues. This may be challenging given the current government's focus on other issues, particularly institutionalizing democracy in Nepal and bringing the Maoists into the political mainstream (septel). Although we do not have to start again at ground zero with FM Oli, we will need to work hard with him to ensure positive movement on refugee issues.

MORIARTY